THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) and (b) The spread of Leprosy has been reduced remarkably as a result of early diagnosis of cases and prompt treatment with MDT drugs. The country has achieved the goal of leprosy elimination as a public health problem [i.e. Prevalence Rate (PR) less than 1/10,000 population] at National level by December, 2005 as set by National Health Policy, 2002. As on 30th September, 2006, the Prevalence Rate has further reduced to 0.89/10,000 population and 27 States/UTs have also achieved leprosy elimination status. Prevention and complete eradication of leprosy is presently not possible as we lack the tools both to protect people from developing leprosy and to diagnose and treat the disease in its sub clinical form.

The number of TB cases reported under National TB Control Programme have been more or less static during last few years. Due to epidemiological situation pertaining to TB disease, presently it is not feasible to target for its eradication. However, to control TB, with an objective to achieve cure rate of 85% of new sputum cases, the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP) widely known as DOTS, which is WHO recommended strategy, was implemented in the country in a phased manner from 1997 and the entire country had been covered by March, 2006.

Malaria is a public problem in the country. However, there has been decline in the incidence of malaria over the years. Kala-azar is endemic in 53 districts of 4 States namely Bihar (33), Jharkhand (4), Uttar Pradesh (5) and West Bengal (11). A comprehensive National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP) is being implemented in the entire country for prevention and control of vector borne diseases namely Malaria, Filaria, Kala-azar, Japanese Encephalitis (J.E.) Dengue, and Chikungunya. The programme is implemented by the States through the existing primary health care system. The objective of the programme is to control malaria and elimination of Kala-azar by 2010.

Criteria for declaring an epidemic

1885. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the criteria for declaring any disease to be as an epidemic;

(b) whether the spread of dengue does not fall in that category of epidemic; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) to (c) Dengue is a seasonal and outbreak prone disease caused by Dengue viruses and spread by Aedes mosquito. It is an endemic disease as being reported regularly by various States over the years with an upsurge in the numbers of cases during monsoon and post-monsoon periods. The occurrence of a disease is considered as an epidemic which is clearly in excess of normal expectancy. Epidemicity of a disease is thus relative to usual frequency of the disease among the specified populations and geographical area at the same seasons of the year.

The Epidemic Diseases Act 1897, empower the State Governments to declare a disease an epidemic if the State Government is satisfied that the State or any part thereof is visited by, or treatened with, an outbreak of any dangerous epidemic disease and that the ordinary provisions of the law for the time being in force are insufficient to prevent the outbreak of such disease or the spread thereof, the State Government may take measures and prescribe regulations as may be necessary.

Research on herbal AIDS drug

†1886. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a research is going on to treat AIDS with a special herb *i.e.* Hypericum perfortum;

(b) whether it is also a fact that there are chances of treating cancer like disease with herbs in our country;

(c) if so, the details of the efforts being made by Government in this regard;

(d) whether Government are considering any ambitious project to prepare medicines with new technology and for research and training in Ayurveda; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.